

# **Content and Conception First before Shooting**

Jeffrey Sward  
July 2023

**V 10.0**

# Find Your Vision

- What do you have a passion to photograph?
- What is the relative importance of
  - Scene documentation
  - Impact
  - Feelings
  - Concepts
  - Illustration
  - Technical considerations

# Field Zen Activity

- Go to a location which you have familiarity
- Select a frequently used camera – lens combination
- Walk the site
- Create images without looking through viewfinder or at back panel
- It may be useful to shoot from chest level
  - Point human body and camera body in the general direction of the intended subject
  - Auto exposure and auto focus are our friends
- Review the resulting images
  - In what way do the resulting image differ from your normal work?
  - A lot?
  - A little?

# Process

- Idea
- Concept
- For Studio
  - Gather props
  - Gather lighting
- Field
  - Determine location
  - Make [mental or written] list of what to look for
  - Make list of equipment needed and pack accordingly
  - Time of day

# From Our Friends In The Motion Picture Industry: Stages Of Film Production

- Pre-production
  - Concept and idea generation
  - Budgeting
  - Idea development
  - Screenwriting & scriptwriting
  - Hiring, recruiting cast and crew
  - Scouting locations & production design
  - Storyboards and shot lists
  - Production schedules
- Production
  - Shooting
- Post-Production
  - Editing
  - Sound design
  - Color correction
  - Visual effects
  - Sound mixing
  - Color grading
  - Distribution
  - Promotion

# Design Basics

- Contrast
- Gestalt perception
- Balance
- Dynamic tension
- Figure and ground
- Rhythm
- Pattern, texture, many
- Perspective and depth
- Visual weight
- Looking and interest
- Content, weak & strong

# Classic Art School Approach

- Noun Verb or Adjective starting point
- => concept
- => content
- => shoot

**The Idea and Concept Is the Difficult Part**

# Previsualization

- Classic previsualization is thinking about imaging the final print or digital image when taking the original
- Classic previsualization is a step *after* idea, concept, and content



# PPA Elements of an Image (via Patchwork Jumble)

1. Impact
2. Technical Excellence (next slide)
3. Creativity
4. Style
5. Composition
6. Presentation
7. Color Balance (next slide)
8. Center of Interest
9. Lighting
10. Subject Matter
11. Technique (next slide)
12. Story Telling

# Technical Attributes via PPA

- File Type and Size
- Resolution
  - Note: File size x resolution = total pixels
  - Often it is easiest to work with total pixels
  - 11x14 at 300ppi = 3300 x 4200 pixels
- Calibrate Your Display
- Aspect Ratio
- Color profile (Adobe 1998 vs sRGB IEC61966-2.1, etc.)
- Pick Your Media
- Find the Right Lab for You

# Intent

Conventional <===> Challenging

Planned <===> Reactive

Documentary <===> Expressive

Simple <===> Complex

Clear <===> Ambiguous

Instant recognition <===> Delayed recognition

# Conventional <==> Challenging

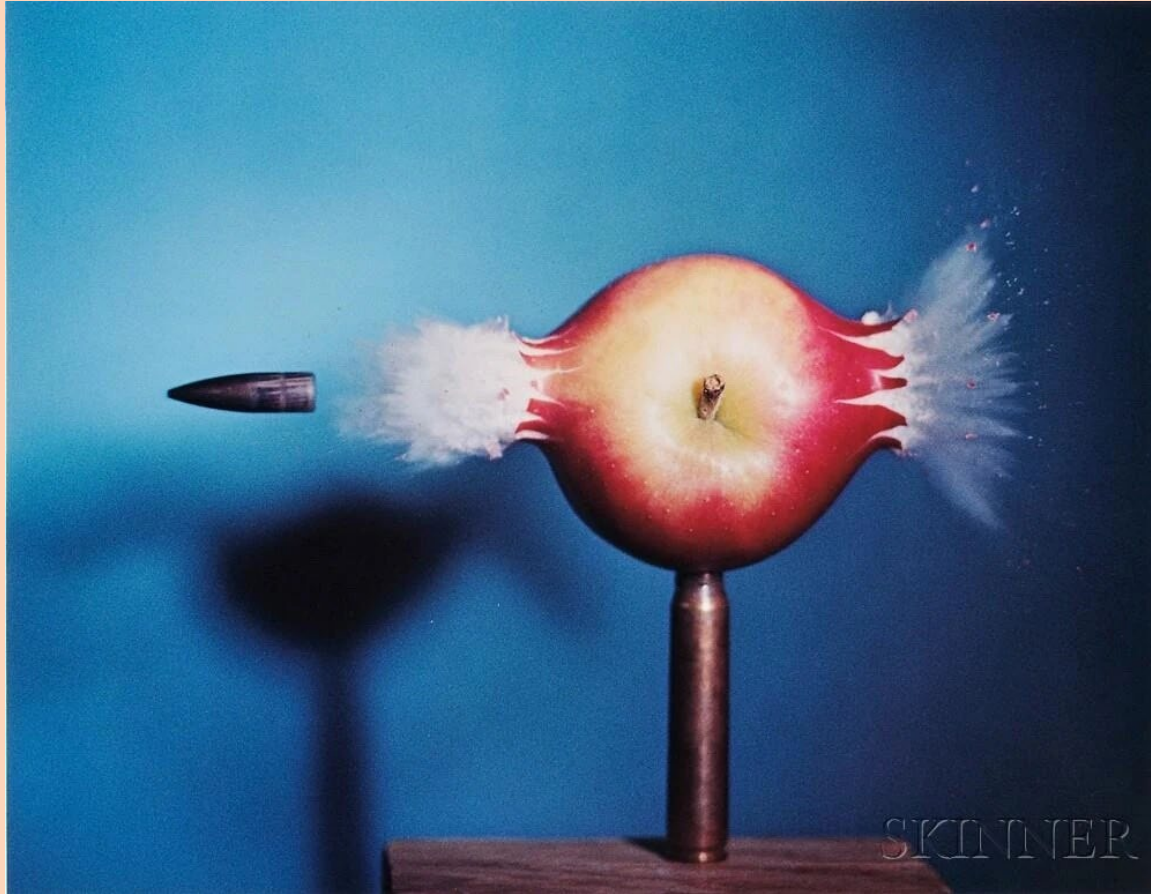


**unknown**  
*Lindsay Adler Headshot*  
**C. 2021**

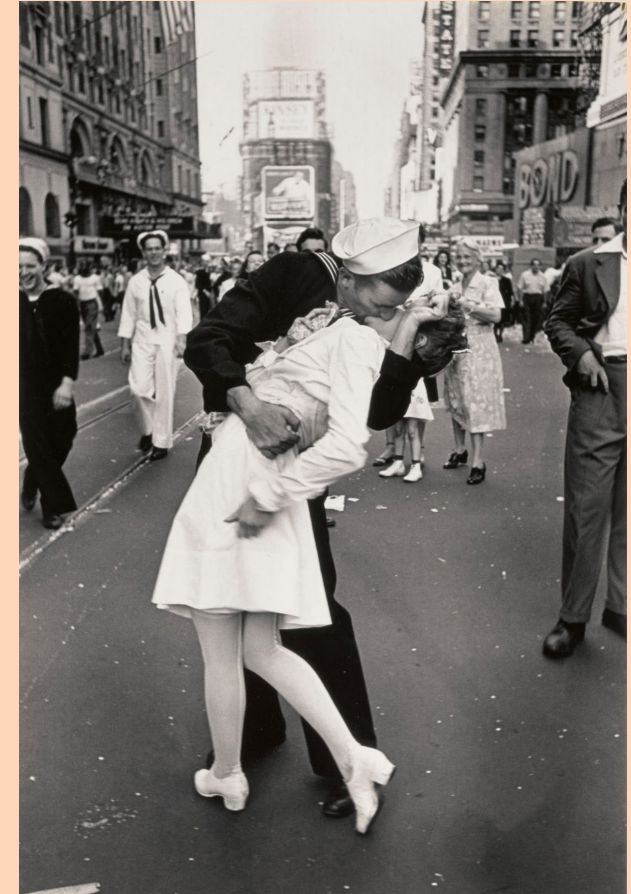


**Hechmann Oleg**  
*Portrait of a beautiful young woman with art make-up*  
**C. 2011**

# Planned <==> Reactive



**William Edgerton**  
*Bullet Through Apple*  
1964



**Alfred Eisenstaedt**  
*VJ Day Times Square*  
1945



# Documentary <===> Expressive

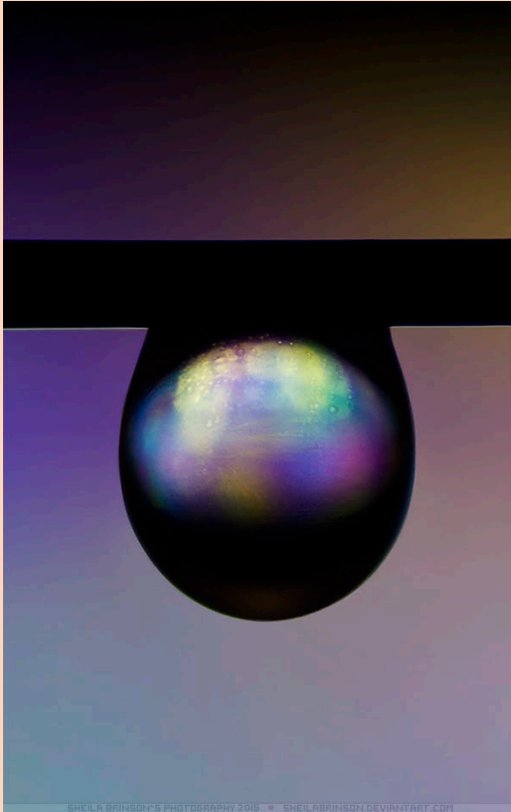


**Lewis Hine**  
*Cotton Mill Girl*  
**1908**



**Michiko Kon**  
*Yellowtail and Comb*  
**C. 1985**

# Simple <==> Complex



**Sheila Carlo**  
*Colors at Night*  
**2015**



**Guy Lambrechts**  
*Sevilla*  
**2018**



# Clear <===> Ambiguous



**Unknown**  
***Obvious Labrador***



**Luc Vangindertael**  
***Ambiguous Light***  
**2020**



# Instant recognition <==> Delayed recognition



**Steve McCurry**  
*Afghan Girl*  
**1984**



**Gordon Lewis**  
*Open Doorway*  
**2012**

**1 / 2**



# Intent

# Study those who have come before

- Studying those who have come before will help establish historical and contemporary context
- Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. - **Ecclesiastes**
- Ok, sure
- All work is derivative
- Your job as a photographer is to utilize your own approach. Your approach will not be identical to anyone else's approach

# Concept => The Great Themes (Time-Life)

- Idea + Intent + ...
  - Still Need Subject  $\approx$  Theme
- Frequently Used Photography Themes
  - The Human Condition
  - Still Life
  - Portraits
  - The Nude
  - Nature
  - War

# Theme: The Human Condition

- {Life as the Camera Sees It}
- Loving
- Shifting Emotions
- Work and Play
- Faith and Sorrow



# Tony Ray-Jones *Lonely Dancers* 1968



Conventional <=====> Challenging

# Theme: Still Life

- The Challenges of Picturing Things
- The Making of a Still Life
- The Qualities Light Reveals
  - A Form Reshaped by Camera Angle
  - Balancing with Composition
  - Balancing with Tones
  - Two Ways to Lead the Viewer's Eye
  - The Advantages—and Problems—of Color
  - Backgrounds That Alter Colors
  - Colors That Are Warm and Cool
  - Abstractions in Color
  - Balancing with Color
  - The Discriminating Art of the Still Life
- Focusing on the Single Object
  - Patterns Made by Repetition
  - Pictures with a Common Denominator
  - Abstraction
  - Appeal to the Emotions





**Walker Evans  
*Open-End Crescent Wrench*  
(from *Beauty of the  
Common Tool*)  
1955**



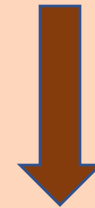
**Clear <===== > Ambiguous**

# Theme: Portraits

- Capturing Character on Film
- Making a Picture a Portrait
  - The Couple: A Problem of Light and Pose
  - Two Views of a Woman's Personality
  - A Child's Spirit—in Tears or Smiles
  - Creating a Composition from a Group
- Portraits in Style -- Practitioners
  - Richard Avedon
  - Bert Stern
  - Inge Morath
  - Philippe Halsman
  - Bill Brandt
  - Mary Ellen Mark
  - Arnold Newman
  - Duane Michals
  - Yousuf Karsh
- Photographing the Photographer



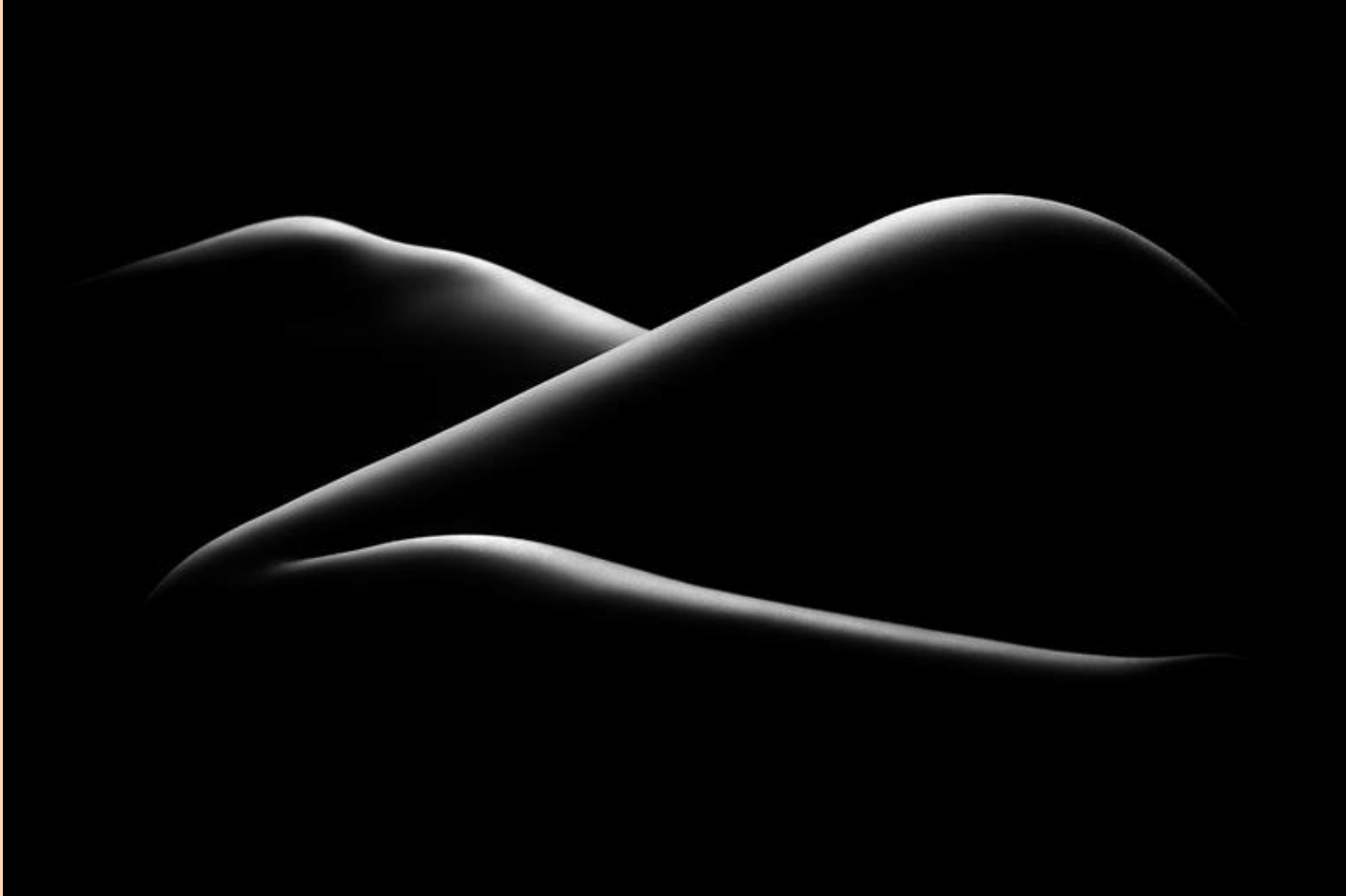
**Edward Steichen**  
***Greta Garbo***  
**1928**



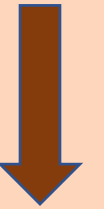
**Simple <=====> Complex**

# Theme: The Nude

- Changing Views of the Human Form
  - The Nude as an Object
  - The Nude as a Design
  - The Nude Distorted
  - The Nude in its Environment
- How to Photograph the Nude
  - The Effects of Pose
  - Creating Distortion
  - Lighting the Nude
  - The importance of Camera Angle
  - Focusing for Emphasis
  - The Grace of Movement



**Johan Swanepoel  
Nude Woman Body  
Scape #17  
2019**



**Instant recognition**

**Delayed recognition**

# Theme: Nature

- The Difficult Drama of Nature
- Stalking Animals with a Camera
  - The Cautious Art of Bird Photography
  - Spying on the Secrets of the Night
  - Animals within Easy Reach
- A Mecca for Landscape photographers (Point Lobos)
  - The Many Guises of the Shore
  - The Rocks' Patterned Tale of Time
  - Trees That Clutch at the Land
  - The Colors of Point Lobos



**Manny Espinoza**  
*Point Lobos*  
**circa 2022**



**Documentary <=====> Expressive**

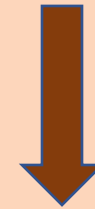
# Theme: War

- The Camera in the Front Lines
- From the Tragedy of War, Great Photographs





**Joe Rosenthal  
*Raising the Flag on  
Iwo Jima*  
1945**



**Planned <=====> Reactive**

**Find out who you are, and do it on  
purpose.**

**- Dolly Parton**

# References

- Freeman, Michael. *The Photographer's Eye: Composition and Design for Better Digital Photos*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.
- Time Life Books, Editors Of. *The Great Themes*. Time-Life Books, 1971.
- Lidwell, William, et al. *Universal Principles of Design*. Rockport, 2010.
- Presentation pdfs  
<https://www.jeffreysward.com/speaking/speaking.htm>
- Photoshop – Lightroom comparison chart  
<https://www.jeffreysward.com/editorials/psvslr.htm>
- Links page for photographic resources  
<https://www.jeffreysward.com/editorials/photores.htm>

# Notes About Photoshop and Lightroom

Attribute	Photoshop	Lightroom
Introduced	1987	2007
Scope	Manipulation, creation, and enhancement of single images. Pixel level perfection. Fine-tuning, retouching, precise local adjustments.	Organizing and processing groups of photos. Quick access to frequently used controls.
Target user base	Creative professionals. Photographers as well as photo retouchers, fine artists, graphic designers, compositing artists, etc..	Photographers

- Full chart link in references at end

2 / 2